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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1400  
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY  
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0155  
CIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0292  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 000103

DIA PASS TO DHO2, CENTCOM PASS TO CCJ5

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TAGS: [AF](#) [MAS](#) [MCAP](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: CENTCOM COMMANDER VISIT WITH TAJIK PRESIDENT

Classified By: Tracey Jacobson, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy Dushanbe, State.  
Reason 1.4 (b),(d)

¶1. (C) Summary. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander David Petraeus completed his introductory visit to Tajikistan on 17 January 2009. The meeting with President Emomali Rahmon, Foreign Policy Advisor Rahmattuloyev, Minister of Defense General-Colonel (U.S. 3-star equivalent) Sherali Khairulloyev, GKNB Chairman Khayriddin Abdurahimov, National Guard Commander General-Major (U.S. 1-star equivalent) Rajabali Rahmonali, and Border Guard Commander General-Major Sherali Mirzo, included discussions on the Northern Distribution Network, cooperation and support for Afghanistan, ongoing problems with Uzbekistan and hydropower, and a request for logistical support.  
End summary.

Building Bridges: Support for Coalition Efforts and NDN  
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¶2. (C) President Rahmon opened the meeting by noting the longstanding, productive relationship he has had with USCENTCOM and expressing support for future cooperation. He thanked General Petraeus for the training, equipment, and infrastructure provided by USCENTCOM, and said that he would fully support USCENTCOM's efforts to develop commercial shipping routes through Central Asia to Afghanistan.

¶3. (C) General Petraeus briefed Rahmon on developments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and noted the incoming administration's increased focus on Afghanistan. He thanked the President for the broad blanket overflight permission for U.S. aircraft and for support of the French detachment at the Dushanbe airfield, remarking that everyone in the area shares a common interest in preventing the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) General Petraeus requested permission to send a team to assess potential transit routes in support of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN). He introduced Rear Admiral Harnitchek from USTRANSCOM and stated that the Admiral was empowered to finalize agreements with Tajikistan on behalf of the United States concerning the NDN. General Petraeus noted that Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan have expressed their support of the NDN concept. He requested expanded hours of operation for the bridge at Nizhniy Pyanj (currently 8 hours per day), which would benefit both Afghanistan and Tajikistan economically, as well as help U.S. and NATO efforts in Afghanistan.

¶5. (C) Rahmon committed to 24-hour operations at the Nizhniy Pyanj Bridge. However, he stated there are requirements for infrastructure repair/development and additional equipment. He specifically pointed out that the road from Qurghon Teppe

to the bridge is need of repair (the Japanese government has agreed to fund this repair but has not yet issued a tender or a construction contract).

¶16. (C) Rahmon also reiterated his request for an additional, smaller bridge in his home district in order to increase trade between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The Nizhniy Pyanj bridge and four smaller bridges in the east of the country (built with Aga Khan Development Foundation support) have made a real impact on the lives of Afghans living in the border areas. Further, over 400,000 tons of cement from Pakistan had been imported into Tajikistan via Nizhniy Pyanj since the bridge opened -- more than twice what Tajikistan could produce on its own. General Petraeus emphasized the need to justify a second bridge first by maximizing use of the existing bridge at Nizhniy Pyanj with 24-hour operations.

#### Need for Greater Efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan

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¶17. (C) Rahmon emphatically stated his interest in a peaceful Afghanistan, maintaining that it will take the cooperation of the international community to solve the problems in Afghanistan and stabilize the region, including Pakistan (which he emphasized was the "homeland of terrorism"). Noting that Tajikistan shares a language and ethnicity with Afghanistan, Rahmon expressed readiness to provide additional support, including increased joint training with Afghan forces. He said development of the economy of the entire area is important. He emphasized that Afghanistan and Central Asia should be viewed as a complex community, the development of which should include transport, communications, electricity, trade, and even new railroad projects with China and Iran.

¶18. (C) Rahmon stated the need to strengthen the security of Tajikistan's borders and to cooperate internationally, including with the OSCE, on initiatives to fight the transit of illegal narcotics. Noting the high level of illicit trade, Rahmon expressed his support for additional U.S. and other international forces in Afghanistan, insisting that all coalition members should have responsibility for counter-narcotics efforts. Rahmon reiterated that the security of Central Asia is directly connected with that of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and he called for increased U.S. efforts in Pakistan as well. General Petraeus agreed that the commitment to Pakistan must be substantial and sustained. The General stated that after leaving Kazakhstan on this trip, he would visit Pakistan.

#### Ongoing Problems with Uzbekistan and Hydropower

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¶19. (C) Rahmon said improved trade between the countries of the region would require "normal" borders and noted that landmines along Tajikistan's border with Uzbekistan had killed dozens of people, including 40 children, and caused significant economic losses. Rahmon described the Tajik relationship with Uzbekistan as difficult. He complained about Uzbekistan's unwillingness to allow the transit of Turkmen electricity, and its refusal to countenance the construction of additional hydropower capability in Tajikistan. He claimed that despite the fact that sixty percent of the water in Central Asia flows from Tajikistan, the country has very little arable land; Tajikistan uses only five percent of the water, and fifty-five percent flows to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Calling for more U.S. investment in hydropower, Rahmon said increased capacity would not only help Tajikistan with its energy needs, but also allow export to Afghanistan, and even further to India and Pakistan. However, Karimov is unpredictable and unwilling to support regional integration. He wants to bring Tajikistan "to its knees -- in fact, he is ready to swallow us." Rahmon said he had recently received a phone call from Afghan President Karzai, who complained that Uzbekistan was creating problems with the import of food via the bridge at Termez, "so I instructed our businessmen to send 5, 000 tons of flour via Nizhniy Pyanj."

## Rahmon Requests Logistical Support

¶10. (C) Rahmon said Tajikistan is relying on Ukrainian-supplied military equipment and weapons to build up its armed forces, since "the Russians took everything with them when they left." However, Uzbekistan will not allow land transit. Rahmon requested U.S. assistance in terms of air transportation of this equipment (we are following up on this request).

### Comment

¶11. (C) President Rahmon looked visibly tired at the meeting, which only lasted 90 minutes (in comparison to other meetings with USCENTCOM Commanders, which have run in excess of two hours). Nonetheless, he was well briefed, undoubtedly by his Foreign Policy Advisor Rahmattuloyev, who had heard from the Ambassador three days prior that Rahmon should be forthcoming on NDN and broader cooperation with Afghanistan if he wants to see more attention and support from USCENTCOM. We assess that Rahmon's enthusiasm for NDN is genuine for both economic and political reasons -- he would not want to be seen to be left behind when his neighbors are playing a positive role.

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